

Tsuneo MAKI, S.N. 10/538,285  
Page 8

Dkt. 2271/74557

REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated October 3, 2007. Claims 1-20 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 14, 16, 17, 19 and 20 have been amended to clarify the claimed subject matter thereof. Accordingly, claims 1-20 are presented for reconsideration, with claims 1, 14, 19 and 20 being in independent form.

Claims 1-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as allegedly indefinite.

In response, the claims have been carefully reviewed and amended with particular attention to the points raised in the Office Action.

Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112 is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 14 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as purportedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,375,184 to Hayashi.

Applicant has carefully considered the Examiner's comments and the cited art, and respectfully submits that independent claims 1 and 14 are patentable over the cited art, for at least the following reasons.

This application relates to improvements devised by applicant for conveying a sheet by attaching the sheet onto an endless conveyance belt.

In an aspect of the present application, a sheet conveyance apparatus for conveying a sheet applies electric charges onto a surface of an endless conveyance belt in a belt-like alternate voltage pattern, and *controls a charge width of the alternate voltage pattern* in a direction of conveyance of the sheet. Each of independent claims 1 and 14 addresses these features, as well as additional features.

As discussed in the application, the electrostatic force required to attract a sheet to be

Tsuneo MAKI, S.N. 10/538,285

Dkt. 2271/74557

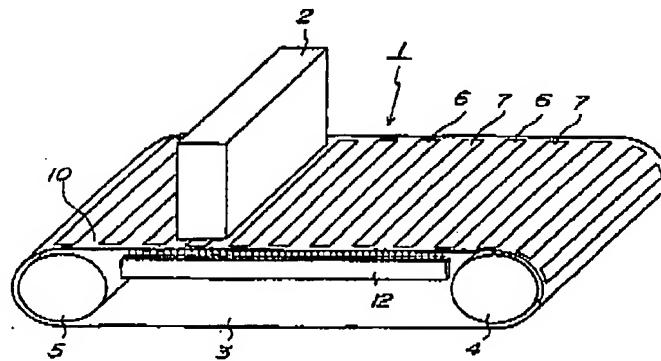
Page 9

conveyed depends at least in part on a kind of material of the sheet. The above-mentioned sheet conveyance apparatus can convey a recording sheet stably, regardless of a kind of material of the recording sheet, by appropriately controlling a charge width of the alternate voltage pattern in a direction of conveyance of the sheet.

Hayashi, as understood by Applicant, proposes a sheet conveying apparatus which utilizes electrostatic force to attract the sheets and comprises a conveyance belt (3) on which stripe-shaped electrodes (6, 7) each fed with a corresponding voltage different from that fed to other electrodes are alternatively arranged. Conducting bluses (11, 12) are disposed on an inner side of the conveyance belt to serve as a power supplying means to supply voltage to the electrodes.

Hayashi, column 2, line 56 through column 3, line 57, describes the apparatus shown in Fig. 1 (reproduced below) of Hayashi:

FIG. 1



Hayashi proposes that a ground voltage and a prescribed voltage are fed to electrodes 6 and 7, respectively, and the electrodes 6 and 7 can have lengths that substantially match the width of the conveyance belt.

However, Hayashi does not disclose or suggest *controlling a charge width of the*

Tsuneo MAKI, S.N. 10/538,285

Dkt. 2271/74557

Page 10

*alternate voltage pattern* in a direction of conveyance of the sheet, as provided by the subject matter of claim 1 of the present application.

Further, Hayashi is concerned with the size of the sheet conveyance apparatus and components thereof and with configuration and positioning of the components (in particular, the conducting bluses) such that paper jams can be readily removed. Hayashi does not express any knowledge or concern of the different electrostatic forces required to attract sheets of different kinds of materials. Moreover, there is no teaching or suggestion in Hayashi that would lead one of ordinary skill in the art to conclude that a charge width of the alternate voltage pattern in a direction of conveyance of the sheet should be appropriately controlled.

Therefore, Hayashi does not render claim 1 of the present application unpatentable.

Independent claim 14 is patentably distinct from the cited art for at least similar reasons.

Accordingly, for at least the above-stated reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 1 and 14, and the claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the cited art.

The Office Action indicated that claims 19 and 20 would be allowable if amended to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112.

By this Amendment, claims 19 and 20 have been amended with particular attention to the informalities indicated in the Office Action. Amended claims 19 and 20 are submitted to be allowable.

The Office Action indicates that claims 2-13 and 16-18 would be allowable if amended to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112 and rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

However, since independent claims 1 and 14 are submitted to be patentable over the cited

Tsuneo MAKI, S.N. 10/538,285  
Page 11

Dkt. 2271/74557

art, no changes to the form of claims 2-13 and 16-18 are believed to be necessary.

In view of the remarks hereinabove, Applicant submits that the application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant earnestly solicits the allowance of the application.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Patent Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees that are required in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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